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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY French Indo China

DATE: 25X1C

SUBJECT: The Viet Nam Government: Censorship
and Propaganda

INFO: [REDACTED]

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ORIGIN

SUPPLEMENT

25X1X

ATTACHMENT: Viet Minh Propaganda

CENSORSHIP BUREAU

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25X1A [REDACTED] note: See [REDACTED] in which it was stated that after the departure of the Nationalist Front elements from the Coalition Government in the spring of 1946, the Censorship Bureau was regarded as no longer necessary and was abolished and that the present censorship exercised by HO CHI MINH is very strict and that "Thought control" is exercised through the People's Committees and by Government leaflets.

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[REDACTED] The Censorship Bureau continued after the withdrawal of Nationalist Front elements and still continues to function; it still has approximately the same personnel and facilities as existed in the winter and early spring of 1946 and is still directed by LUU VAN LOI. Because of the tightening of Vietminh control, the continued operation of the printers and an increasing shortage of the means for publication, it has become increasingly difficult for any non-Vietminh organization to publish anything; consequently, the task of the Censorship Bureau was facilitated by the mere indoctrination of those Vietminh personnel who were in a position to publish [REDACTED]. Note: 25X1A This sentence also reported [REDACTED]. In practice, however, it has been necessary to retain the censorship because some of the lesser Vietminh members charged with publication have not been wise enough to avoid gross blunders despite the excellent indoctrination accorded them. At present as in the past the stamp of approval of the Censorship Bureau must be secured before anything can be published. There is a new advance in the technique of Vietminh Censorship. It now conducts preliminary activities through the local cultural associations by means of informal discussions prior to submission of articles to the Censorship Bureau; consequently, when these articles arrive for the approval of the Bureau, there is less in them that requires censoring.

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2. Despite the shortage of paper and means of printing, dissident elements such as the Nationalist Front could manage to issue propaganda if it were not for

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the Censorship Bureau; consequently, whatever these elements issue must be given a clarifying distribution. There is no prohibition against listening to the French or other foreign radio broadcasts, but Vietminh indoctrination and propaganda have been so effective that the reaction of the average Vietnamese on listening to the French radio is one of pure disgust.

INFORMATION CENTERS AND PROPAGANDA
25X1A [REDACTED]

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3. Information Centers are run by the Information Department, which is a part of the Ministry of Interior of the Vietnam Government. These Information Centers are run with the cooperation and collaboration of the local Cultural Associations for National Welfare; this type of cooperation between the various ministries and the associations is an important phase of the proper functioning of both. The ministries do not give directives to the associations but approach the executives of the Central Cultural Association for National Welfare with suggestions and requests. These executives then give the necessary directives to the associations on a lower level, i.e. [REDACTED]

25X1A [REDACTED]

25X1A [REDACTED]

Note: The information in paragraphs 4-5 represents the observations by source of the practical workings of the Vietnam Government propaganda effort in the field, an account, though not complete, of the immediate point of contact between the propaganda machine and the people themselves).

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4. In practically every city and town in Vietminh-controlled areas a public Information Center has been established, located in an attractive and central place. These centers are open rooms in which the walls are lined with posters, publications, war trophies, letters found on French soldiers (See paragraph 6), comments from the foreign press, and many different kinds of display propaganda. In some of these rooms propaganda murals have been painted on the walls, in other rooms different kinds of guns were displayed; without exception these information centers have been made as attractive as possible. Just outside the room are the blackboard newspapers that are kept up to date with current news; inside are a few books and magazines. In the Pac Kan (105-50, 22-06) Information Center was a piano, the only one source saw in Vietminh-controlled areas. These centers attract large crowds and serve as general congregating and meeting places. In those towns in which radio newscasts are available, the radio is set up in front of the Information Center Office. Weather and technical considerations permitting, radio newscasts are given over loud speakers in cities like Cao Bang (106-16, 22-39). There are no radio programs for the public in Thai Nguyen (105-50, 41-35), but the news received there is more complete and up to date and the blackboard newspaper, extending over a space of six blackboards, is longer than in any other cities in Vietminh-controlled areas.

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5. There is almost a total absence of private commercial advertising, and locally made cigarettes are the only item advertised on buildings. Ho Chi Minh's picture is everywhere. There are slogans painted in attractive print on practically every public building, town wall, and many private homes and shops. These slogans, dealing with a few common themes but stated in a variety of ways, include: national unity and work for resistance--increase production, destroy buildings (Scorched Earth Policy), build barricades; unity among the various tribes and language groups; kindness and consideration to the "foreigners" in their midst--referring to the Chinese; resistance against the French (see paragraph 6) by not joining

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their army, not buying French foods, not giving them information, not giving them shelter, etc.; elimination of illiteracy, opium smoking and venereal disease. Another theme, fundamentally an anti-superstition campaign, is called "science" and is aimed at the elimination of superstitious beliefs and directed toward scientific fact, such as the elimination of taboos for avoiding or curing malaria and substitution of scientifically proved methods, getting good medicine rather than relying on "old wives' tales", boiling water, keeping houses, streets and bodies clean. [REDACTED] Note: See previous report on 25X1A Health and Education in Vietminh-controlled areas).

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6. Vietminh propaganda for external consumption and that for internal consumption do not exhibit extreme differences; both emphasize friendship for the "good" French, undying resistance against the French imperialists. In the propaganda for internal consumption there is more emphasis on resistance against the French and the tone is somewhat more violent; external propaganda tends to place more emphasis on friendship toward the democracies of the world. Vietminh propaganda seldom resorts to blatant falsehood; about nine tenths is factually true and the other tenth exhibits a subtle distortion of interpretation. The bodies of French soldiers killed in battle are carefully searched by agents of the Vietnam military intelligence and personal letters which might be useful to the Vietminh propaganda cause are turned over to the Information Department. Such letters are given publicity via radio, newspapers, and the walls of the Information Centers. One of the favorite methods of Vietminh propaganda is the issuance of documentary condemnations of French policy by French individuals themselves. Some examples of this are: (1) Temoignage, a skillful Vietminh pamphlet of extracts from French writers condemning French maladministration and atrocities in Indochina. (2) Lettre aux Amis d'Hanoï, a Vietminh issue of a letter written by a French couple outlining their favorable treatment by the Vietminh in helping them to escape from the Japanese after 9 March 1945.

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7. Comment la Revolution a Triomphé de la Famine is a Vietnam Government official pamphlet in French. It gives the official version of a remarkable accomplishment: in the spring of 1946 most neutral observers agreed that the outstandingly important fact in respect to the immediate future of Tonkin at that time was famine; it was expected that 2 million people would die of starvation. The famine was real enough, but it was greatly mitigated by the intelligence and energy of the Vietminh efforts to control it.

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